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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN SCENE-SETTER FOR GENERAL MCNABB,
COMMANDING GENERAL U.S.TRANSCOM, 18-20 NOVEMBER 2008

REF: A. TASHKENT 1140
[1](#)B. DAO IIR 6 939 0073 08
[1](#)C. TASHKENT 1124
[1](#)D. DAO IIR 6 939 0113 08
[1](#)E. TASHKENT 1113
[1](#)F. DAO IIR 6 939 0114 08

Classified By: LTC Jeff Hartman, Defense Attache, for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Embassy Tashkent looks forward to hosting you and advancing one more step toward opening a new Northern Distribution Network (NDN) (previously referred to as the Northern Ground Line of Communication or NGLOC) to Afghanistan. The Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) viewed Rear Admiral Harnitchek's October 2008 visit as a senior technical expert visit to demonstrate and discuss logistical infrastructure, potential local purchase options and possible transit conditions for U.S. non-military/non-lethal goods via Uzbekistan. Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation had the opportunity to tour the new Navoi International Airport, the main feature of a future free-trade zone, and discuss its advantages as part of NDN(NGLOC). These advantages include President Karimov's personal interest and GoU officials' anxiousness to get this operation moving. The GoU will soon hand over the operations at Navoi to Korean Air Cargo, already a strong USG partner. In the long term, Navoi's ample ramp space for aircraft-to-aircraft cargo transfers might relieve some maximum-on-the-ground (MOG) issues at other airfields supporting OEF.

(C) Rear Admiral Harnitchek's team also toured the Customs Service and Border Guard-controlled areas at Friendship Bridge near Termez, just across the river from the Railways terminus at Hairaton, Afghanistan. GOU officials

are very proud of the recent infrastructure improvements which include the Guzar-Kumkurgan rail line which connects the Navoi area and international rail transit traffic with Termez and Hairaton. U.S. aviation fuel transiting to Afghanistan already moves on this new rail line. Present limitations on rail transit include the political challenges of arranging transit across Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and the logistical challenge of overcapacity at Hairaton, Afghanistan which causes backs-ups on the Uzbek side of the border.

(C) The most daunting challenge to NDN(NGLOC) is that the transit of any goods laden by a foreign military across Uzbekistan is illegal. These strictures were adopted in the 1990s to prevent warring parties in Tajikistan and Afghanistan from legally receiving supplies across Uzbekistan without the GoU's permission. These prohibitions still serve a valuable purpose. Transit permissions will need to be arranged.

(C) The GoU expects a proposal for transit of U.S. DoD cargos. Embassy Tashkent recommends proposed transit of Class I (subsistence, health and comfort products) and Class IV (construction materials) for the duration of three years automatically renewable by exchange of diplomatic notes with the consent of both governments. The GoU appears amenable to four transit conditions to include (1) commercial air with transfer to commercial air to Afghanistan, (2) commercial air with transfer to rail to Afghanistan, (3) rail transit through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan, and (4) local purchase from Uzbekistan with transfer to Afghanistan.

(C) Embassy Tashkent proposes to send a description of the proposed transit cargos, conditions and duration to the GoU prior to your arrival. We do NOT recommend passing draft diplomatic notes or proposed transit agreements during this visit. Any such proposed agreement will first need to be shaped and communicated in the Inter-Agency.

(C) Embassy Tashkent discourages any request for use of U.S. military transport aircraft except to leave open the later possibility of such landings and take-offs on a case-by-case basis. Embassy Tashkent also believes that transit by truck to Afghanistan is a much more contentious issue within the GoU than rail or air transit. Discussions about truck transit could possibly bog down and delay other more promising transit conditions. Truck transit may be an option for locally purchased cargo, but we recommend that such local purchase options be handled separately.

(C) The GoU is expected to favor any transit that uses Uzbekistan Railways, Uzbekistan Airways and Korean Air Cargo. Uzbekistan Railways and Uzbekistan Airways are wholly state-owned corporations and owe hundreds of millions of dollars (U.S.D) to Asian banks for construction loans and new equipment. Korean Air Cargo is looked at by the GoU as a valued business partner which it has commissioned to develop Navoi International Airport into a profitable intercontinental air cargo hub as well as to bring Uzbekistan Airways into Skyteam as a code-share member. The GoU wants the USG and NATO to succeed in Afghanistan but all GoU parties are quick to stress that this is a commercial initiative and that they expect to earn profits.

(C) Embassy Tashkent recommends proposals to test commercial air-to-commercial air and commercial air-to-rail options soon after Korean Air takes over operations at Navoi on 1 December 2008 even before an arrangement is made in order to emphasize our seriousness and to get the empty airfield at Navoi some business. Uzbekistan Airways, Korean Air, the GoU and probably President Karimov himself are all anxious to get their Navoi project moving.

(C) Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation had the opportunity to discuss local purchase options with representatives from U.S. and Uzbek companies. Logistically, local purchase will reduce overall end-to-end NDN(NGLOC) transit volume and costs. Politically and diplomatically, it should help Uzbekistan's economy, which needs to create jobs. Embassy Tashkent recommends that you reiterate our interest in local procurement and propose to GoU representatives to send a survey team from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) at the earliest convenience.

(C) Uzbekistan also needs counter-narcotics assistance.

Due to the combined effects of joblessness and proximity to Afghanistan, narcotics-trafficking is an ever increasing threat to Uzbekistan. To address this problem, the Ministry of Defense has requested unmanned aerial vehicles and the GoU Customs Service has requested large portal monitors. Embassy Tashkent recommends that you reiterate the USG's commitment to counter-narcotics efforts while also pointing out that the DEA's full-fledged return to Uzbekistan is crucial to expedite any USG efforts to provide assistance.

(C) Embassy Tashkent requested and continues to advocate for a meeting between yourself and President Islom Karimov. In the past week, GoU officials tried to downplay the possibility of such a meeting. After your visit, GoU officials will relay their impressions to the Presidential Apparat. This process is necessary before any final GOU decisions or proposals are made in regard to NDN(NGLOC).

(C) As part of the next step, presentation or

negotiation of formal agreements with the GoU will require approval from the Inter-Agency. The results of your consultations with the GoU will be of great interest and will inform the USG regarding how and when a possible intergovernmental agreement can be presented to the GoU. End summary.

Air transit advantages through Navoi

12. (C) The Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) viewed Rear Admiral Harnitchek's October 2008 fact-finding visit as a senior technical expert survey for demonstrating and discussing Uzbekistan's logistical infrastructure, potential local purchase options and possible transit conditions for U.S. non-military/non-lethal goods to transit Uzbekistan. As part of that visit, Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation had the opportunity to tour the new Navoi International Airport which is intended to be the main feature of a future free-trade zone.

(C) There are several advantages to using Navoi as part of NDN:

a. (C) The airport at Navoi is one of President Karimov's personal pet projects to attract international businesses and cargo carriers to Navoi as part of the GoU's "Dubai in the desert." GOU officials are anxious to get this operation moving, attract other private companies to use Navoi (UPS, DHL, etc.) and start re-paying the \$300 million that the GoU owes to Japanese and Korean banks.

b. (C) On 1 December 2008, the GOU will hand over its operating contract to Korean Air Cargo. This is also advantageous to the USG since Korean Air Cargo (KE) already has a strong relationship with the USG.

c. (C) Korean Air also has arranged a partnership with Uzbekistan Airways (HY) which is significant because Uzbekistan Airways has blanket over-flight rights over Afghanistan and maintains a fleet of IL-76s.

d. (C) Due to rail infrastructure improvements in the 1990s, the city of Navoi is now the hub for rail commerce in central Uzbekistan which facilitates air-to-rail, or rail-to-air transfer possibilities.

e. (C) Most importantly, as witnessed by Rear Admiral Harnitchek's group, Navoi International Airport has ample ramp space to conduct aircraft-to-aircraft cargo transfers which might relieve some maximum-on-the-ground (MOG) issues at Bagram and other U.S.AF-managed airfields supporting OEF. Uzbek and Korean representatives at Navoi even claimed that they have enough material-handling equipment (MHE) at Navoi and that, if required, they claimed they could move additional MHE from other Uzbek airports to support operations at Navoi.

f. (C) The refinery in nearby Bukhara recently finished certification for JET A1 air fuel production and will be a supplier for Navoi International Airport.

(C) The only important possible limitation on transit through Navoi may be lack of flexibility between contract carriers. Embassy Tashkent has listened to concerns from Korean Air representatives that the USG is looking at using varied air cargo contractors rather than exclusively Korean Air Cargo or, its partner, Uzbekistan Airways. Korean Air is

a Delta code-share which means it meets "Fly America" standards. Korean Air representatives are fully aware of that. Korean Air representatives may want exclusive rights or at least a majority share of the air cargo movements

through Navoi for Korean Air and its partner, Uzbekistan Airways.

Rail transit advantages and limitations through Uzbekistan

13. (C) Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation also had the opportunity to tour the Customs Service and Border Guard-controlled areas at Friendship Bridge near Termez, just across the Amudaryo (river) from the Railways terminus at Hairaton, Afghanistan. GOU officials are very proud of the recent infrastructure improvements completed since independence which include rail lines in western Uzbekistan and the recently completed Guzar-Komkurgan rail line which connects the Navoi area and other international rail transit traffic with Termez and Hairaton. Like the airport at Navoi, the GoU is anxious to start repaying the \$160 million U.S.D from Japanese banks that was borrowed to complete the Guzar-Komkurgan rail line. U.S. forces already benefit from this new rail line. At present, about 65 percent of JP-8 U.S.-grade aviation fuel for U.S. forces in Afghanistan transits Uzbekistan in rail tanker cars (RTCs) to Hairaton. In addition, about 99 percent of TS1 aviation fuel for the Afghan National Army and other users of Russian-made helicopters in Afghanistan also crosses this new rail line en route to Termez.

(C) The primary limitations on rail transit across Uzbekistan are completely due to issues beyond the GoU's control. Foremost are the political challenges of arranging transit of military goods across Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

It is doubtful that the GoU has enough political leverage in Astana or Ashgabat to help expedite favorable rail transit conditions from the governments of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. One key point is that the Uzbeks, including President Karimov, crave recognition as the leader among Central Asian states. Reminding them of their desired leadership role in Central Asia may help get them to approach the Kazakh and Turkmen governments. The GoU's relationships with their Kazakh and Turkmen neighbors have improved considerably in the past two years. The GoU and Uzbekistan Railways do have periodic bilateral meetings with the Kazakh government and its rail officials.

(C) The main logistical challenge to rail transit is the rail yard at Hairaton, Afghanistan which is already exceeding its capacity in large part due to the JP-8 and TS1-laden RTCs off-loading there. As Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation witnessed, this over-capacity backs up rail cars on the Uzbek side which must wait at Galaba or on sidings near the bridge for space to become available on the Afghan side. CENTCOM J4 is discussing how to possibly expedite freight off-loading at Hairaton in order to alleviate the congestion near the bridge.

(C) A possible future issue, Customs inspections, will likely become a challenge in time if traffic is increased significantly. The GoU is already concerned about containers returning from Afghanistan and is requesting assistance from the USG to buy technologically-advanced devices to expedite inspections for narcotics and other contraband crossing from Afghanistan.

GoU legal barriers to NDN(NGLOC) transit of Uzbekistan

14. (C) The most daunting challenge to NDN(NGLOC) is that the transit of any goods laden by a foreign military across Uzbekistan, even non-lethal and non-military, including U.S. DoD, is prohibited by law. These legal strictures were adopted in the 1990s to prevent warring parties in Tajikistan and Afghanistan from receiving supplies across Uzbekistan without the GoU's permission. In that regard, these laws still serve a valuable purpose. Transit permissions will need to be arranged. The USG did have an earlier transit

agreement which was abrogated in 2005. GoU officials knowingly ignore the current transit of DoD contractor-delivered fuel and water to Afghanistan. The fact that the fuel originates in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, as well as plausible deniability of the eventual owner, may help explain the GoU's reluctance to interrupt the aviation fuel's transit, as well as the transit fees they are collecting. Some GOU officials have privately acknowledged the transit of fuel, but these same officials have never boasted about this among other claims of GOU assistance to U.S. or NATO efforts in Afghanistan, such as over-flight and hosting the Uzbek-German base at Termez. During the same time that this transit continued, at least seven truckloads of DOD-laden non-military/non-lethal materials were stopped while entering Uzbekistan, arrested, and later returned to their point of origin or held as contraband as is the case with a non-lethal shipment to Tajikistan held since December 2007. Each of these contractor-controlled shipments was arrested because it was laden by a foreign military, U.S. DoD, without prior permission. Embassy Tashkent is very doubtful that GOU officials will allow containers of DoD contractor-laden non-lethal and/or non-military goods headed to Termez without some sort of prior agreement.

The GoU's expectations of a transit proposal

15. (C) The GoU expects a proposal for transit of U.S. DoD cargos. Discussions, thus far, have been limited to transit of Class I (subsistence, health and comfort products) and Class IV (construction materials). The GoU is also expecting an agreed upon duration for transit. The Embassy suggests that three years is probably an acceptable proposed duration.

Embassy Tashkent advises that we request that such protocol be automatically renewable by exchange of diplomatic notes with the consent of both governments. The GoU has signaled its acceptance of following four transit conditions:

- a. Commercial air through Navoi with transfer to commercial air to Afghanistan.
- b. Commercial air through Navoi with transfer to rail to Afghanistan.
- c. Rail transit from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.
- d. Local purchase of Class I and IV from Uzbekistan with transfer to Afghanistan.

(C) Per prior coordination, Embassy Tashkent recently sent a description of the transit conditions, a proposed duration, and a list of items proposed to be prohibited from transit by diplomatic note to the GoU. This provides a starting point for discussions next week and provides the GoU time to discuss this internally before meetings. Embassy Tashkent recommends that you then reiterate the proposal to GoU officials and ask them pointedly to recommend the necessary diplomatic means to make this NDN (NGLOC) transit possible. We do NOT recommend passing draft diplomatic notes or proposed transit agreements during this visit. Any such

proposed agreement will first need to be shaped and communicated in the USG and across the Inter-Agency community.

(C) Embassy Tashkent discourages any request for use of U.S. military transport aircraft except to leave open the later possibility of such landings and take-offs on a case-by-case basis. Routine use of U.S. military aircraft will raise wider concerns within the USG and potentially cause alarm in the GoU and other governments concerned with potential U.S. "bases" in the region. Thus far, discussions between the GoU and USG have stressed solely commercial transit.

(C) Although the GoU has listened to discussions which included truck transit, Embassy Tashkent believes that transit by truck to Afghanistan is a much more contentious issue within the GoU than rail or air transit. Discussions about truck transit could possibly bog down and delay other more promising transit conditions. Embassy Tashkent knows that the issue of counter-narcotics checks for trucks and containers returning from Afghanistan, as well as road conditions, increased highway traffic and fuel availability will all be factors in any GoU deliberations about

large-scale truck transit. After very brief discussions concerning possible truck transit, both the German government and NATO abandoned any considerations of road transit and agreed to pursue exclusively rail options. Truck transit may be an option for locally purchased cargo, but Embassy Tashkent recommends that such local purchase options be handled separately.

(C) For business reasons, the GoU is expected to favor any transit that uses Uzbekistan Railways (UTI), Uzbekistan Airways (HY) and Korean Air Cargo (KE). Uzbekistan Railways and Uzbekistan Airways are wholly state-owned corporations and, as stated above, owe hundreds of millions of dollars (U.S.D) to Asian banks for construction loans and equipment, including four Boeing 767s. Korean Air Cargo is looked at by the GoU as a valued business partner, depended on to make Navoi International Airport profitable as an intercontinental air cargo hub as well as to bring Uzbekistan Airways into Skyteam as a code share member. The GoU selected Korean Air Cargo after very little consideration of other competitors.

(C) Geo-politically, the GOU wants the USG and NATO to succeed in Afghanistan and NDN (NGLOC) is looked at by GoU officials as part of its future assistance to help win in Afghanistan. However, GoU officials, and certainly businessmen from Korean Air Cargo and Uzbekistan Airways, are quick to stress that this is a commercial initiative and that they expect to earn a profit. For these reasons, plus lingering bad feelings from Karshi-Khanabad's (K2) closure, Embassy Tashkent recommends stressing commercial financial incentives for transit and local purchase opportunities.

(C) Embassy Tashkent recommends proposals to test commercial air-to-commercial air and commercial air-to-rail options soon after Korean Air takes over operations at Navoi on 1 December 2008, even before a bilateral transit arrangement is finalized. These tests should incorporate Korean Air Cargo or Hanjin Group assets whenever possible. This will emphasize our seriousness and get the empty airfield at Navoi some business. Uzbekistan Airways, Korean Air, the GoU and probably President Karimov himself are all anxious to get their Navoi project operational.

Local Purchase

16. (C) When Rear Admiral Harnitchek's delegation was here, it had the opportunity to discuss local purchase options with representatives from U.S. and U.S. partner companies in Uzbekistan, as well as Uzbek companies that manufacture goods and provide services that the USG needs for Afghanistan. Logistically, local purchase will reduce overall end-to-end NDN(NGLOC) transit volume. Politically and diplomatically, it will help stabilize Uzbekistan's economy, which needs to create more jobs. It would probably be prudent if we were more fully vested in our OEF partners' economies. A long-term economically viable and stable Uzbekistan is essential for NDN's success and the success of the USG's overall goals in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

(C) As has been discussed, Embassy Tashkent recommends that you reiterate our interest in local purchase and propose to GoU representatives to send a survey team from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) at the soonest convenience to follow-up on discussions from the October 2008 visit.

Counter-Narcotics Assistance

17. (C) Uzbekistan needs counter-narcotics assistance. Due to the combined effects of joblessness and proximity to Afghanistan, narcotics-trafficking from Afghanistan, especially through Tajikistan, is a rising dangerous threat to Uzbekistan. At his first meeting with USG officials, new Minister of Defense Kabul Berdieyev even announced that counter-narcotics is now an MOD priority mission. Since that time, the Ministry of Defense has requested unmanned aerial vehicles to help surveillance efforts on Uzbekistan's borders with Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The Uzbek Customs Service

recently requested large portal monitors to check Railways and truck-carried containers for narcotics and other contraband. U.S. counter-narcotics assistance could go a long way towards facilitating an agreement on transit.

(C) Embassy Tashkent recommends that you reiterate the USG's commitment to helping Uzbekistan's counter-narcotic's efforts, especially as it will help expedite transit of USG supplies to Afghanistan. However, we request that you continue the press for the DEA's full-fledged return to Uzbekistan as the lead agency for USG counter-narcotics efforts. GoU pleas for assistance as part compensation for NDN(NGLOC) can only be viewed as half-hearted until the GOU fully accredits the USG's lead counter-narcotics agency. Return of the DEA will also expedite any USG efforts to provide portal monitors or other counter-narcotics technology to help the GoU combat narcotics-trafficking.

Decision-makers

18. (C) Embassy Tashkent requested and continues to advocate for a meeting between you and President Islom Karimov. In the past week, GoU officials tried to downplay the possibility of such a meeting. The GoU reasoning was that this is still a meeting on political questions and that the GoU still does not know what the USG is planning to propose.

(C) In any case, your final trip itinerary will likely be based on the GoU's preference of visitors seeing first-hand the subject matter of discussion, in this case

Navoi International Airport, followed by meetings with relevant GOU officials from junior to senior. The senior GoU leaders with whom we requested meetings include Minister of Defense Kabul Berdieyev, Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade Eliyor Ganiyev, First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov, and Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) Murod Ataeyev. As is GoU custom, the office call with the most senior member of the GoU will probably be the very last meeting of the trip. All other GOU officials with whom you meet will report to that senior GoU official in order to prepare for the last meeting.

(C) After your visit, GoU officials will relay their impressions to the Presidential Apparat. This process is necessary before any final GOU decisions or proposals are made in regard to NDN. We expect that the results of your visit will also be discussed at the GoU's monthly NSC meeting. The Chairman of the NSC is President Karimov.

Recommended talking points

19. a. (C) The USG proposes transit of Class I (subsistence, health and comfort products) and Class IV (construction materials) by the following conditions for a period of three years automatically renewable by diplomatic notes with the consent of both governments.

(1) Commercial air through Navoi with transfer to commercial air to Afghanistan.

(2) Commercial air through Navoi with transfer to rail to Afghanistan.

(3) Rail transit from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.

(4) Local purchase from Uzbekistan with transfer to Afghanistan.

b. (C) The USG was impressed by the facilities at Navoi and Termez and is interested in helping to "kick-start" the Navoi project, increase transit through the new Guzar-Komgorgon rail corridor, and help the GoU start repaying its loans by being new customers of Navoi International Airport, Uzbekistan Airways and Uzbekistan Railways.

c. (C) While waiting for a final agreement and rail transit permissions from neighboring countries, the USG is interested testing commercial air-to-commercial air and commercial air-to-rail transit conditions through Navoi International Airport in December 2008 or January 2009.

d. (C) The USG is seriously considering local purchase

options in Uzbekistan. In October 2008, we met briefly with business leaders. The USG proposes to send a survey team from DLA to investigate procurement options in Uzbekistan at the soonest convenience.

e. (C) The USG is considering the GoU's recent requests for counter-narcotics assistance from Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Customs Service. Full re-accreditation of the DEA would ease the USG's ability to respond to these requests.

Political cultural nuances

¶10. a. (C) Culturally, Uzbeks hate the unknown. They would rather informally know what we are going to say well enough in advance in order to staff their own responses and ensure that their bosses are informed. For that reason, we will forward a description of proposed transit conditions to the

GoU before your arrival.

b. (C) Please avoid the popular American description of a "win/win" scenario. In Central Asia, that more accurately translates to "I have the better end of this transaction and you are too slow to figure it out."

c. (C) Patience. Embassy Tashkent believes that some offices in the GoU may string out NDN(NGLOC) discussions until General Petraeus visits, possibly in late January 2009. This would fit a general GoU desire to move gradually, "postopyenno," in improving relations with the U.S.

Remaining Kagan Response Equipment

¶11. (U) Your delegation may be expected to provide an update to GoU officials on the remaining balance of EOD equipment bound for Kagan. The equipment is currently in Kuwait. DAO Tashkent and ARCENT are trying to arrange delivery of the EOD aprons, remaining mine detection equipment and batteries to Bukhara. Any update to this delivery will be welcome by GoU officials and will demonstrate that this initiative is a USG priority. Embassy Tashkent will provide you the latest progress on these efforts prior to your meetings with the GoU.

Proposed next step

¶12. (C) TRANSCOM has stated the need for a DLA team to visit Uzbekistan and investigate possibilities for local purchase and for the U.S.AF to send an airfield survey team to Navoi. Embassy Tashkent recommends that this be requested and explained in meetings with senior GoU officials.

(C) Presenting or negotiating formal agreements with foreign governments requires interagency approval, including OSD Policy and General Counsel, the Joint Staff, and State regional and legal offices. The results of your consultations with the GoU will be of great interest and will inform the Inter-Agency regarding how and when a possible intergovernmental agreement can be presented to the GoU. Your recommendation on the lowest level of possible formality will be important to gaining consensus within the Inter-Agency.

NORLAND